

BÉLA MESTER

Hungarian Cartesians in the Mirror of the Historiographical Narratives*

This paper offers an overview of the history of Cartesianism in Hungary in the light of Hungarian historiographical traditions, especially the history of literature, history of philosophy, history of science and education, and church history; each of these have different narratives. Before constructing a meta-historiographical analysis, by way of background, the history of Hungarian Cartesianism itself is surveyed. I will first summarize the institutional, religious, and cultural background while focusing on the new structure of the Hungarian *peregrinatio academica* during the age of Reformation. From the perspective of the history of Cartesianism, the most important element is the *peregrinatio* of the Calvinist wing of Hungarian Protestants at Dutch universities in the Golden Age of the Netherlands. Second, I will discuss the parallel impact of Dutch Cartesianism and several British and Dutch religious ideas—Puritanism, Presbyterianism, Coccejanism—on Hungarian culture. Third, I will describe the historical structure of Hungarian Cartesianism. I will outline the question of the periods of the great narrative of the four generations of masters and their disciples, the structure and social context of Cartesian debates in Hungarian philosophy, comparing them with their counterparts in the Netherlands and in France. After this description of the Cartesian phenomenon of Hungarian philosophy, I will

* This paper is an extended and edited version of my presentation at the conference organized by the *Institut Français de Budapest*, on January 23rd–24th, 2014, entitled *Descartes est-il cartésien? Descartes et son interprétation*. My presentation was dedicated to Zádor Tordai on the occasion of his 90th birthday; I was fortunate to have him as my thesis advisor, working with me on themes from the history of philosophy; he played a key role in my research on Hungarian Cartesianism. Let me use this opportunity to express my gratitude to the organisers and to the *Institute Français* for being so flexible in allowing me to speak in English at a francophone event. I gave a presentation on this topic for the first time at a conference organised at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, entitled *Cartesianism in Europe, Cartesianism in Hungary* (November 30th, 2006); this paper (in Hungarian) appeared in the proceedings volume for the conference, in a special issue of the journal *Kellék* (Mester 2006). Special acknowledgments are due to those who participated at both conferences for the opportunity to discuss again, eight years later, my developing thoughts on this topic. The present research was supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA K 104643).

analyze the dominant historiographical narratives of this period in Hungarian historical studies, such as the early modern *church history*, history of *education*, history of *science*, especially the history of *physics*, history of Hungarian literature, and, of course, history of philosophy. Towards the end of the paper, I will formulate several methodological remarks about the tasks for future research on these themes.

I. INSTITUTIONAL, RELIGIOUS, AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The cultural history of Hungarian early modernity is characterized by the absence of continuous medieval universities. When philosophy was making its appearance in the newly founded Protestant colleges, it was not an established scholastic philosophical tradition of a university or universities that it was altering; instead it was bringing changes to the ideas of Hungarian individuals who were educated at various foreign universities. After the Reformation, strong connections with the universities of Padua and Genoa have all but evaporated. The great *Bursa Hungarica* in Kraków, Poland, became an empty building, but its former fellows founded a similar institution in Wittenberg in the next academic year, which to the Calvinist turn becoming a majority trend in Hungarian Protestantism. At the same time, the College of Debrecen in Hungary was structured based on the Melanchthonian model, which its founder had studied in Wittenberg, and was restructured after the Calvinist turn (for a classic overview see Bucsay 1959.). Around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, Hungarian culture restructured its network of European connections as a parallel process with the established *confessionalisation*. The new target destinations of Hungarians abroad in the 17th century were mainly the Dutch universities, in several cases; these were accompanied by short visits at the centers of Protestant theology in England. In the 17th century, the universities of Germany were frequented mainly by the Lutheran minority of Protestants in Hungary, partly because of the usage of the German language in daily life. (German-speaking cities of Hungary were Lutheran during this century.) This confessional background had a big influence on Hungarian Cartesianism. However, in the Catholic and Lutheran schools, Cartesianism did not have a significant impact. In the Calvinist (and Unitarian) institutional network Cartesianism exerted a strong, later on a dominant influence and it went hand by hand with some theological ideas of Dutch and English thought. The extensive influence was not due to the structural similarity of these systems of ideas, but rather to the fact that Hungarians learned about these ideas at these same universities.

The ideas of previous generations of Hungarian Protestants, before the first wave of Cartesians, was characterized by the *encyclopaedism* of Alsted and Bisterfeld, professors of the college of Gyulafehérvár (Weissenburg or Karlsburg,

Alba Iulia, Apulum)¹, established by the Prince of Transylvania. In their eclectic books, Aristotelian and Baconian natural philosophy appeared on the same page with the logic of Petrus Ramus. Other Protestant colleges were under similar influences, but they lacked a famous schoolmaster like Alsted. It is well to mention the relatively significant position of *natural philosophy* in their *curricula*, this will be a characteristic of the Hungarian Cartesian era as well. Representatives of the first generation of Hungarian Cartesianism, János Apácai Csere and Sámuel Enyedi, obtained this philosophical background before their peregrinations abroad.

II. DUTCH, ENGLISH, AND GERMAN INFLUENCES

The Hungarian Protestant students after their peregrinations to universities abroad could plan four types of careers once they obtained the required degree: as educated gentlemen, use their knowledge in social life and in politics; as clerks employed by aristocrats, or by the government; as clergymen; and as schoolmasters. (The fifth choice, the establishment of an independent existence as a *medical doctor*, was a highly rare phenomenon. This is characteristic in the cases of several important figures of the last period of Hungarian Cartesianism, in the first decades of the 18th century.) The two last possibilities were often connected: many clergymen were schoolmasters in their first active years, and a few schoolmasters of the great, central colleges were elected bishops. We can find philosophers, and amongst them Cartesian ones in the last two types, but we must remember: because of the close connection between the career of a clergyman and a schoolmaster, almost all of them had a characteristic theological, and a characteristic philosophical system of beliefs, and they had studied with professors both of theology, and philosophy at Dutch universities, or in several cases in Germany. Various professors of the same Hungarian student were often members of opposite intellectual groups in their original intellectual environment. Hungarians often endeavored to visit as many universities as possible. An extreme advice at the time was: “you must stay at the same place no longer than six weeks. This is enough to know who the significant local intellectuals are, and meet them, what the important books are and buy them”. (The opportunity of peregrinations was offered to members of the Hungarian elite only, in the form of Dutch and Hungarian grants. When the Hungarians arrived at a foreign university, they have already completed their graduate studies, and in several cases, they were of the same age as their younger professors. Under these

¹ In this paper I use toponyms listing Hungarian forms first. Equivalents in other languages – German, Romanian, and early modern Latin – will be added to their first appearances in brackets.

intellectual conditions they could follow the above mentioned advice.) Due to these reasons, we can characterize the Hungarian reception of every important Cartesian professor in the Netherlands in the 17th century, and almost every Hungarian Cartesian was a student of one of the Dutch Cartesians; we cannot outline the history of Hungarian Cartesianism as a simple reception of that of Dutch philosophy, because of the mixture of influences of various Cartesian and non-Cartesian traditions.

A fitting example of this is the oeuvre of the greatest anti-Cartesian thinker within the Hungarian cultural life of the 17th century, János Pósaázi. His professor of philosophy was Johannes de Bruyn, and his professor of theology was Voëtius. His own philosophy was an amalgam of Baconian and Cartesian natural philosophies, with an empiricist criticism of Cartesian scepticism. The case of Pósaázi in the historiography of Hungarian philosophy is a good example for the demonstration of the uselessness of the *paradigm of the history of reception*. In a period of the Cartesian debates of Hungarian philosophy, Pósaázi was a protagonist on the anti-Cartesian side. Based on this fact, and following the paradigm of the history of reception, researchers in this field have supposed that he was the follower of a kind of British empiricism, which is possible via a direct impact only. The last evidence of the impact for this approach was to find Pósaázi's name on the Oxford list of students. Without this evidence, a historical description of Pósaázi's thought, based on this approach, can conclude only that "it was an eclectic philosophy". I suppose that in this "eclecticism" are hidden the possible novelties of his thought, which evaporated in the interpretations based on the paradigm of history of reception; (for a rather old but detailed overview on Pósaázi's life, and thought see Makkai 1942).

At this point, it is well to mention the names of the professors in the Netherlands with considerable influence on Hungarian students; (for good syntheses on the history of Hungarian Cartesianism and its connection with the Netherlands see Túróczy-Trostler 1933; Tordai 1962, 1964). Amongst the theologians—excluding the above mentioned Voëtius—three professors of Leiden University had a significant influence on Hungarians: Adrian Heereboord, Abraham Heydanus, and Christian Wittich. Several Hungarian historians of philosophy speak about a characteristic group of Hungarian students of Heereboord, or a Hungarian Heereboord-school. Other professors whose teachings had major influence on Hungarians were three Franeker professors, Christianus Schotanus, Jan van der Waeyen, and Ruard Andala; and two Utrecht professors, Burman, and Alexander Roëll. The just mentioned theologians had characteristic opinions on Cartesianism; pro, contra, or searching a mediatory position between their Cartesian philosophical opinions and their theological beliefs. Of course, these topics were inherited by their Hungarian students as well. But at the same time, Hungarian Protestantism was influenced by another theological movement, without any native connection with Cartesianism: English and Scottish

Puritanism, and Presbyterianism. John Milton in his *Areopagitica* mentioned students from Transylvania, with a patriotic pride, who arrived to England to learn the language and theology:

Lords and Commons of England, consider what Nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are the governours [...] Nor is it for nothing that the grave and frugal sends out yearly from as farre as the mountanous borders of *Russia*, and beyond the *Hercynian* wildernes, not their youth, but their stay'd men, to learn our language, and our *theologic* art. [...] Why else was this Nation chos'n before any other, that out of her as out of *Sion* should be proclam'd and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all *Europ*. (Milton 1869, 68)

These Hungarian students came from the Netherlands to complete their theological education, and played a major role in the Hungarian Puritan movement. The first Hungarian Puritan group was called the *League of London* (established in 1638, led by János Tolnai Dali); and the first English grammar written for Hungarians was published in an important center of Hungarian Puritans, in Debrecen (Komáromi 1664). English universities did not have a considerable influence on Hungarian philosophy at this time; they were at best refreshing the Baconian tradition, already existing in Hungarian colleges before the direct English connection. *Mediation* between Cartesianism from the Netherlands and theological ideas from Britain remained the task of the professors of Hungarian Protestant colleges.

Among Dutch philosophers, the Utrecht ones had the greatest influence on Hungarians, and Jan de Bruyn's Hungarian disciples became important and influential personalities of Hungarian philosophy with their own work, published partly in the Netherlands, and partly in Hungary and in Transylvania. Jan de Raey, Burcher de Volder, and Arnold Geulincx in Leiden had their own populous circles of Hungarian students, and Tobias Andreae in Groningen also had a few Hungarian students. Poiret rarely had direct influence on the Hungarian thinking of his era, but the only closer Hungarian member of his circle in Amsterdam, Miklós Apáti, was the greatest Hungarian Cartesian according to the opinions of several historians of philosophy (Túróczy-Trostler 1933, 15–27; for Apáti's masterpiece, see Apáti 1688). It must be mentioned here that German connections to Hungarian Cartesianism were also infrequent. It is a prominent feature of the philosophy of Lutheran schools of Hungary that they almost completely bypass Cartesianism, because of their close connection with German Lutheran universities, and the relative lack of the connections with other areas of the European world of universities. Dissertations written about Cartesianism at German Lutheran universities by Hungarian students were (apart from some medical ones) exclusively about anti-Cartesian criticisms. These students later became professors of philosophy, and schoolmasters of Lutheran colleges in

Hungary. It is unlikely that they inspired their students to find a Cartesian professor in the time of *peregrinatio academica*. Concerning Cartesianism, a notable exception can be found in the cultural life of the cities with Lutheran-majority populations in Hungary, and Transylvania. Such exceptions include Andreas Teutsch (ethnically German), and Sámuel Köleséri (ethnically Hungarian) in Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt, Sibiu, or Cibinum) in Transylvania. These clerks and physicians were influenced mainly by Poiret. Both of them were students of Dutch universities, different from the big majority of their German-speaking, Lutheran fellow-citizens in their city. Their extensively modified and filtered Cartesianism appeared in their publications as late as the first years of the 18th century, but these writings never became part of the *curriculum* of the local Lutheran college, or anywhere among the Transylvanian Saxons.

A unique but typical example of Hungarian Cartesianism with a German connection is György Vörös's philosophical dissertation with strong Cartesian opinions written at the University of Jena, in the last years of the 17th century. He quotes many Dutch Cartesian authors, mainly Johannes de Raey. The chairman of his procedure was from the Netherlands, as well; and—though we have not concrete data on his antecedents—he was a student of a Dutch university before his years in Jena, according to the opinions of several historians of philosophy. Another unique Hungarian Cartesian of Germany was the converted Unitarian, Mihály Pál Rhégeni (Paulus Rhegenius). Rhegenius was the only Hungarian disciple of Johannes Clauberg—a posthumous disciple of his. Rhegenius became a well-known author in the German philosophy of his lifetime as a participant of a debate between Tschirnhaus and Christian Thomasius the former author. Rhegenius in his criticism of Thomasius emphasises mainly the Anti-Cartesian characteristics of Thomasius' works, above all concerning the problems of method, and of Cartesian scepticism. In spite of his conversion, Rhegenius became a teacher of philosophy at the only Unitarian college of his era, in his home town, in Kolozsvár (Klausenburg, Cluj, Claudiopolis). Under his influence, Cartesianism became dominant among Unitarians in Transylvania as well.

The examples of Vörös and Rhegenius show us two characteristics of Hungarian Cartesianism. However, there were Cartesians at German universities, and Hungarians had connections with this network; this was due to the relative weakness of Cartesianism in Germany in the 17th century and also to the structure of connections with German universities; the German influence in itself was not a sufficient source of Cartesianism for a Hungarian student in Germany. To find the appropriate Cartesian figures and readings in Germany, a Hungarian student needed direct connections with the Netherlands; that was György Vörös's path; or he needed a Cartesian training at his college, at home, during his undergraduate education; that was Rhegenius' path. At this point it is well to turn to the topic of the relative autonomy of the Hungarian Cartesian movement, not as an original philosophy, but as a phenomenon of the history of

ideas, which has its own structure, incorporated in chains of masters and their disciples, in periods of its own narrative, and the changing nature of philosophical debates within its own institutional framework during the second half of the 17th century. The prominent position of Hungarian Cartesianism in Hungarian historiographical traditions, with their various focal points, will be a topic of the last part of this paper.

III. THE STRUCTURE OF HUNGARIAN CARTESIANISM

The institutional structure of Hungarian Cartesianism is readily described as a long chain of Hungarian Cartesian philosophers and their disciples, all of them practicing as schoolmasters; but all the members of this chain have another Cartesian teacher as well, often someone Dutch. Voëtius noticed that Hungarian students, when they arrived at a Dutch university, were already infected by “dangerous theological and philosophical ideas, probably a consequence of the influence of their teachers in Hungarian colleges”. For example, one of the first Cartesians, Apácai was influenced—among others—by Regius; his disciple, Pál Csernátoni became a Cartesian thinker in Apácai’s school, but he had his own Dutch as well. Apácai’s other disciple, the aristocrat Miklós Bethlen, who was subsequently appointed Chancellor of Transylvania, became a Cartesian in Apácai’s school, but he was a student of Regius as well; he was choosing a professor based on Apácai’s indirect advice. A disciple of Pál Csernátoni, (Apácai’s disciple), Ferenc Pápai-Páriz, a famous physician and man of letters of his era, inherited the Cartesianism of the school of Apácai, and Csernátoni. But he developed his own thinking abroad, by following the direction learned in his *alma mater*. In another important college, in Debrecen, Márton Szilágyi Tönkő was a disciple of Geulincx; his own greatest disciple, Miklós Apáti arrived in the Netherlands under Szilágyi’s influence as a devoted Cartesian, but he could not have become a prominent author without the influence of Poiret.

The institutional background of this chain of disciples, and that of their European connections, was a network of the main Calvinist colleges in Hungary and Transylvania, and the single Unitarian college (located in Transylvania). The absence of Lutheran and Catholic colleges in this network is due to political reasons, and due to differences in the European connections of the various denominations; as a result, from the regional point of view, the denominations had a major impact on this educational network. The main centers of this network were usually under the rule, or at least under the influence of the Prince of Transylvania, and the influential political, and social groups of Transylvania. The only school that worked as a real *community college*, under the rule of the local magistrate, was the one in Debrecen; others were subject to a web of powers of various, often difficult patrons: cities, aristocrats, nobility, and the Prince of

Transylvania. This social and political background is important from the point of view of my paper only because of its influence on philosophical debates practiced within this establishment. (The different societal basis for the colleges and how that affected their roles in the Cartesian debates parallels (in a smaller-scale, reduced form) the differences between the social background of the universities of Utrecht and Leiden in the Netherlands.)

The only Unitarian college in the region was following a Cartesian tradition, but it did not play a major role in Cartesian debates because of the restricted position of the Unitarian Church. It was mentioned already that the college of Debrecen, as a community college, enjoyed relative political independence, but—despite its Cartesian tradition—Debrecen professors did not play a major role in Hungarian Cartesian debates. The college of Gyulafehérvár (Weissenburg or Karlsburg, Alba Iulia, Apium) enjoyed the patronage of the Prince of Transylvania, who, for instance, had the right to intervene in inauguration procedures of the professor-candidates. One of the main goals of this college was to supply the state administration with educated clerks. It was politically the most unbalanced institution in Hungarian education of this era. Apácai lost his job here because of its political importance, but for the same reason, he could be a master of as famous and talented a young aristocrat as Miklós Bethlen. Apácai's next and last school was the one in Kolozsvár (Klausenburg, Claudiopolis, Cluj). It was a college that was significant at the national level, while maintaining a close connection with the local magistrate. The College of Gyulafehérvár was at first destroyed, and later replaced with that of Nagyenyed (Strassburg, Aiud). It remained a college of great significance, whose patrons were mostly members of the aristocracy and local nobility rather than the Prince of Transylvania. It was a part of the identity of both the students and professors of Nagyenyed that they were members of the “college of the country”, and not the college of the Prince. Among the remaining colleges, the only one that played an important role in Cartesian debates was the college of Sárospatak. This college was founded under aristocratic patronage, but in the time of Cartesian debates it was a college in exile, driven out of Sárospatak by the new Catholic landlord of the town. The college used the empty buildings of the college of Gyulafehérvár, and in the decades of exile had no major social contact with the influential lobby groups of Transylvanian society. It was entirely dependent on the Prince's benevolence in both of financial and political affairs, including ecclesiastical politics. It became, yet again, a “court college”. Debates on Cartesianism that took place in this type of institutional network exerted a solid influence in the light of the subsequent history of Hungarian ideas, adding an important chapter to Hungarian Cartesianism, as well.

The first period of Hungarian Cartesianism was formed by the generation of Apácai and his immediate disciples. One must mention the names of Sámuel Enyedi, Apácai's Cartesian colleague in a contemporary Puritan centre,

Nagyvárad (Grosswardein, Oradea), and the inheritor of his chair in Kolozsvár, András Porcsalmi. This period is characterized by the parallel expansion of Puritanism in theology, and Cartesianism in philosophy. A symbiosis of these ideas in contemporary thinking is well characterized by Apácai's educational program as a constructive combination, as well as the instrumental use of the title "Cartesianism" for the main debate of this period. Apácai's Presbyterian Puritanism was linked with a democratic educational program, on the basis of equal human reason. If every person has equal reason, and our ideas about ecclesiastical government need enough educated people for electing a body of elders for every congregation, then it follows that the schoolmasters can produce the needed educated mass by training commoners; and it is, moreover, their obligation to do so.

The most characteristic debate of this period was a political procedure against Apácai, carried out in the presence of the Prince. According to his accuser, Isaacus Basirius, Apácai was an Independent. His philosophical ideas, that is, his Cartesianism was a matter of secondary importance, but from here on, Cartesianism, and nonconformist theological ideas, Puritanism and Presbyterianism in Apácai's time, and a little bit later Coccejanism became closely related in Hungarian thinking throughout most of the Cartesian era. Isaacus Basirius (Isaac Basire) is identical with the court clergyman of Charles I, the executed king of England. Basire in the years of the English revolution lived in exile in various countries, and held a variety of jobs and professions. He lived in Transylvania by the invitation of the Prince from 1654 until 1661, when he returned to England after the restoration. During his stay in Transylvania he was a professor at the college of Gyulafehérvár, as a successor of Bisterfeld's chair. He was a competent conservative author of political theology, both in England, and in Transylvania, and a useful expert for the Prince in certain state affairs, but he was not a professional philosopher. Considerations of conservative, orthodox, and anti-Cartesian Calvinist theologians in the Continent remained strange ideas for him, for a believer of the Church of England. Basirius saw a Presbyterian, and accused him of being an Independent, because for him these ideas were the same; and he mentioned the Cartesianism of the accused because he had learned the new Continental custom of public debates: linking Cartesianism with a nonconformist theological theory. The fatal meeting of Basirius and Apácai was an accidental occurrence; we can interpret it as a debate of persons of different philosophical background and training. Maybe Basirius would have been surprised if he were told that he was participating in a *philosophical* debate; by contrast, to Apácai, it seemed natural to assess the situation as one in which *the philosophy itself was persecuted* through his persecution at the hands of an uneducated layperson.

The second period of Hungarian Cartesianism includes the generation after Apácai, and their opponents, in the 1670s and 1680s. This was a period of continuous debates, both ecclesiastical (on Coccejanism) and philosophical (on Car-

tesianism). These debates were not independent of politics, of the influence of the “higher powers”, and the malicious connection of political, theological, and philosophical issues. Despite these sinister factors, debates of this period were structured ones; we can easily separate the philosophical elements from the others if we notice the actual scene, actors, jury, and the target audience of the presented play. They were the following: scene, jury, and the target audience of the theological part are the synods of the Calvinist Church. Actors: Mihály Tófeus, the Prince’s court clergyman on the orthodox side, and Márton Dési, Coccejus’s close disciple, a professor of theology at the college of Nagyenyed, on the other side. The scene of the philosophical part was the press. Actors: János Pósaházi, professor of philosophy at the college of Sárospatak, in exile in Gyulafehérvár, on the anti-Cartesian, mainly empiricist side; and Pál Csernátoni, professor of philosophy at the college of Nagyenyed, Apácai’s disciple, on the Cartesian side. It was “clear and distinct” by the contemporary public opinion that this was a debate between the two colleges, actually: between the men of the Prince, and the men of the country (here, ‘country’ just means the educated gentry). In spite of the theological and political background of Pósaházi’s works, they are valuable in providing relevant anti-Cartesian argumentation concerning Cartesian scepticism and the concept of substances. The jury of the philosophical part of these debates is either the Prince himself, or the — always changing — public opinion of the philosophers. If the Prince does not decide the question based on political reasons, and through political argumentation, that opens a new, free area for philosophical liberty. After long and unsuccessful debates, the Prince silently resigned the possibility of using political tools, and Cartesianism became a dominant, almost official philosophy of Calvinist colleges based on the public opinion of their philosophers. (The college of Sárospatak, both in its exile, and in its home, continued, after its return, Pósaházi’s eclectic empiricism, what became a rather peculiar view a few years later.)

At this point we have arrived at the last period of Hungarian Cartesianism, one that is without grand and well-documented debates. Cartesians had no serious or powerful opponents. We can observe in this era signs of political theories with a Cartesian background, a relatively new topic in Hungarian Cartesianism, (for an overview see Köpeczi 1975). This was connected with a social phenomenon: the greatest Cartesians of this era were not schoolmasters, but independent physicians like Ferenc Pápai-Páriz, aristocrats with a political role like Miklós Bethlen and other independent personalities like Miklós Apáti. This rarely researched branch of political philosophy within Hungarian Cartesianism ended with the independence of Transylvania. Cartesianism, as a tradition of colleges, did not maintain a distinctive role in subsequent Hungarian philosophy. It slowly evaporated as the new philosophical traditions of the Continental Protestant education rose to prominence, especially in the system of Christian Wolff. According to the opinion of several historians of philosophy, the last signs of Hungarian Cartesianism survived until as late as the last years of the 18th century.

Hungarian philosophy, after the Cartesian debates, retreated back to the schools, and lost its publicity for almost all of the 18th century. The next remarkable event in Hungarian philosophy is the long debate on Kant, from the beginning of the 1790s, lasting for three decades (1792–1822).

Having completed an overview of Cartesianism in Hungary, it is well to reflect on the main themes, and patterns of Hungarian historiographical traditions concerning research on Hungarian Cartesianism.

IV. IN THE MIRROR OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRADITIONS

At this point, I will provide a very brief analysis of the impressions, assessments of Hungarian Cartesianism within the major historiographical traditions, church history, history of education, the history of sciences, history of Hungarian literature, and, at the very end, history of philosophy.

1. Church history and history of education

Confessionally embedded writers of Hungarian church history had collected and published a considerable amount of facts and texts about Hungarian philosophy from the last decades of the 19th century. About Cartesianism, because of its historical link with some theological ideas, and because of its institutional–confessional background, we can, of course, find information in the works of Calvinist church history. In this, an inevitable role was played by the pioneering work of Jenő Zoványi, (for the newest edition of his synthesis see Zoványi 2004). The works of Zoványi and his followers, especially the earlier ones, often have some denominational bias, and their focus is on the questions of theology, and ecclesiastical rule; philosophy has only a secondary importance in their narratives. The ecclesiastical framework of their research often tends towards overestimation of the denominational fragmentation of the Hungarian theoretical culture of early modernity. A special problem for Hungarian Cartesianism is the semi-underground status of Unitarian manuscripts from the 17th and 18th centuries, and their reflections on Cartesianism.

Researchers focusing on the history of Hungarian education, as experts working on a special field within the history of ideas, have produced editions of texts, translations from Latin, and analyses; but their publications usually overestimate the schoolmasters of this era and their educationally relevant writings, which are generally not the main works of these authors. (Pedagogically relevant works of an early modern schoolmaster are often festive inauguration speeches, full of obligatory rhetorical elements and institutional references.) A special status of school history within this line of research causes the overestimation of the

educational writings of Hungarian early modern philosophers. For example, the educational works of Apácai, written mainly in Hungarian, have seen a lot of modern editions in various forms; meanwhile, many of his other, philosophically relevant writings, especially his lectures on natural philosophy, remained unpublished manuscripts available in archives only.

2. *History of science*

Studies focusing on Hungarian history of science have a relatively strong tradition within research conducted on Hungarian Cartesianism. A harbinger of this was István Weszprémi, physician of the city of Debrecen, who wrote in his great work (of the genre of *historia literaria*) about the history of famous Hungarian physicians, from the beginning of his lifetime to the 1760s and 1770s (see Weszprémi 1774–1987). I mentioned earlier that several Cartesian thinkers were physicians. Weszprémi's work is an important source for researchers focusing on the Hungarian Cartesian era, but the medical line has been overestimated in it because of the point of view of Doctor Weszprémi. Later, when history of science became a modern, autonomous field of research in the second half of the 20th century, researchers tried to find the beginnings of science, especially physics, in the works of Hungarian Cartesianism. A recent publication written from this perspective is on Apácai's *Encyclopaedia*, a characteristic instance of a textbook rendition of science in early modernity (see Palló 2006). It is a commonly held opinion, written in every manual and encyclopaedia, that Hungarian Cartesianism has a stronger emphasis on physics and medicine than traditions in other parts of Europe. This judgement has its basis in the remarkable amount of natural philosophy among Hungarian Cartesian writings, and in the high number of medical degrees among Hungarian Cartesian thinkers. But my impression is that in this strong form, such a statement mirrors the myopia of the history of science within the history of philosophy. For a synthesis of the history of physics in Hungary in connection with Cartesianism, see M. Zemplén 1961, 189–208, 248–258, 298–302; M. Zemplén 1998, 173–179. M. Zemplén's ideas on the history of Hungarian physics are connected with László Mátrai's ideas on the history of Hungarian natural philosophy, see Mátrai 1961.

3. *History of Hungarian literature*

The traditional narratives of research approaches within the history of Hungarian literature were strongly linked with the question of language. In these narratives, rooted in the romantic era of the 19th century, the focus was on texts that were written in Hungarian. These approaches focused on Apácai's Hungarian

writings, and some other works, written in the last period of the Cartesian era, for example Mikós Bethlen's memoirs, mainly from the point of view of the history of how Hungarian philosophical terms developed. Following philological opinions, the majority of philosophically relevant texts are eliminated from the focus of inquiry. This philological tradition is the reason why we have monographic analyses of only Apácai's oeuvre but not of others—because he wrote enough in Hungarian. This narrow-minded philological view is today a thing of the past. The Latinity of Hungarian early modernity tries to find its rank in the cultural canons, but the old topics are vivid ones on the pages of the new manuals and lexicons. The history of Hungarian philosophy has inherited a lot of peculiarities rooted in the traditions of the history of literature.

4. History of Hungarian philosophy

It is a widely discussed topic within the historiographical tradition of history of philosophy that Hungarian Cartesianism is a symbolic and paradigmatic phenomenon of Hungarian theoretical culture. Probably, it was used at first as a conscious tradition for expressing a philosophical identity in a representative volume of the Kantian group in the Hungarian debates on Kant. István Márton, the head of the Hungarian Kantians formulated his ideas in the following form:

This novelty of ideas is nothing for me, in comparison with the truthfulness of our utterances. Every new custom seems strange for humans, but afterwards they will become accustomed to them, as they were to the most ancient ones. At first, many scholars were fighting against [Des] Cartes' philosophy, later they have become accustomed to it like Mithridates to poison. (Márton 1818, 173)

István Márton is here referring to Descartes in general, only, as a historical parallelism with the Kantian turn of the philosophy of his own age. A few years later, in his history of Hungarian philosophy—published and financed by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1834—Pál Almási Balogh perceived this topic differently. Almási Balogh, living in the era of linguistic nationalism, identified the first Hungarian philosopher with a philosopher, who was the first to write in Hungarian. He was Apácai, the Cartesian, (for details see Almási 1835, 45–50).

The opinions of the special connection between Cartesianism and Hungarian culture became stronger in a history of Hungarian philosophy formulated in terms of Hegelian concepts, written in the 1850s and 1860s by János Erdélyi. According to his opinion, all cultural heritage before Cartesianism is a part of the *pre-history* of Hungarian philosophy. In Erdélyi's formulation, the turn to the institutional and linguistic autonomy of Hungarian philosophy parallels the great modernization turn of European thinking. Through the words of Erdélyi:

We establish three periods of the history of philosophy. The first one, the *pre-history* contains the narrative from the beginning of the historical life of the nation till János Apácai Csere, as a process of growing accustomed to European thinking, with the period of scholasticism with its variations, experiments of six centuries in the sciences; and by the end, the sciences have been formulated in the language of the nation. (Erdélyi 1885, 8) The pre-history of philosophy has come to an end. The next figure of our story is János Apácai Csere. Through him, we were in the same historical moment as the initiator of the modern system of ideas, Cartesius, and we were independent in our philosophy through the usage of our own language in theoretical thinking. (*Ibidem*, 104–105)

A few decades later, Bernát Alexander, the first professor of the history of philosophy as an autonomous discipline within Hungary, on the pages of his preface to the first volume of his series of classical philosophers in Hungarian—it was Descartes' *Discours*—writes about Descartes generally, regarding his work as a turning point within European philosophy, and specifically as an initiator of Hungarian philosophy. He put this as follows:

With this translation, the Hungarian nation expresses its gratitude to the great philosopher. At the University of Utrecht where Descartes' new thought was first disseminated, a poor Hungarian fellow became an enthusiastic follower of this new worldview, which was being persecuted at the time. The fellow decided that he would disseminate these ideas in his homeland, through the language of his homeland. The name of this student was János Apácai Csere. He was the first Hungarian philosopher, who became the champion of free thinking in our country, through his words and writings. At this time, we were still in accordance with the European spirit. (Alexander 1881, V–VI)

Alexander's words quoted above established an image of *Cartesius noster* as a special Hungarian relationship with Cartesian thought. Despite this characteristic estimation of Hungarian Cartesianism in the historiographical tradition of Hungarian philosophy, this point is not mentioned in the majority of modern editions and translations, nor does it appear in a manual of the Cartesian century of Hungary. The task at hand can be carried out only by unifying, within a complex landscape, the above mentioned historiographical traditions. This unification is thus the major objective that future research on Hungarian Cartesianism should aspire to achieve.

REFERENCES

- Alexander, Bernát 1881. Előszó. In Descartes: *I. Értekezés az értelem helyes használatának s a tudományos igazságok kutatásának módszeréről. II. Elmélkedések a metafizikáról*. Fordította s magyarázatokkal ellátta Alexander Bernát. Budapest, Franklin-Társulat (*Filozófiai Írók Tára*; 1).
- Almási Balogh, Pál 1835. Felelete ezen kérdésre: Minthogy a' philosophia' minden ágának kifejtése 's hazánkban terjesztése leginkább az által eszközölhető: ha nemzeti íróink a' philosophiára nézve szüntelen szemök előtt tartják, milly sikerrel dolgoznak elődeik, vagy miben 's mi okra nézve maradának hátra; ez a' kérdés: Tudományos mivelődésünk története időszakonként mit terjeszt elénkbe a' philosophia állapotja iránt; és tekintvén a' philosophiát, miben 's mi okra nézve vagyunk hátrább némely nemzeteknél? Budán, Magyar Tudós Társaság. (*Philosophiai pályamunkák*; Első karbeli jutalomfelelet).
- Apáti, Miklós 1688. *Vita Triumphans Civilis, Sive, Universa Vitae Humanae Peripheria. Ad Mentem Illustris Herois et Philosophi, D. Renati Des Cartes: Ex unico centro deducta*. Amsterdam, Abraham Somer.
- Bucsay, Mihály 1959. *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Ungarn*. Stuttgart, Evangelisches Verlag.
- Erdélyi, János 1885. A bölcseztet Magyarországon. Budapest, Franklin-Társulat (*Filozófiai Írók Tára*, 6; *Erdélyi János Bölcsészeti Dolgozatai*, 1).
- Komáromi, Csipkés György 1664. *Anglicum spicilegium*. Debrecen.
- Köpeczi, Béla 1975. Karteziánus politikai eszmék Magyarországon és Erdélyben a XVIII. század elején. *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 79/4. 417–432.
- Makkai, Ernő 1942. *Pósaázi János élete és filozófiája*. Kolozsvár, Universitas Francisco-Josephina (*Acta Philosophica*, 3).
- Márton, István 1818. A' Morális Katekhizmus' Ideája. In Kazinczy Ferencz (bevez.) *Prof. Tiszt. Márton István úrnak Ker. Morális Katekhizmus nevű munkájára írt RECENSIÓK Az azokra tett feleletekkel egybekötve*. Bétsben, Pichler Antalnál.
- Mátrai, László (vál., bevez., jegyz.) 1961. *Régi magyar filozófusok XV–XVII. század*. Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó (*Nemzeti Könyvtár*; *Filozófiatörténet*).
- Mester, Béla 2006. A magyar karteziánizmus történetírási hagyományaink tükrében. *Kellék*, 32. 95–109.
- Milton, John 1869. *Areopagitica*. Ed. by Edward Arber, preceded by illustrative documents. London, Alex. Murray Son (*English Reprints*).
- M. Zemplén Jolán 1961. *A magyarországi fizika története 1711-ig*. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó.
- M. Zemplén Jolán 1998. *A felvidéki fizika története 1850-ig*. Sajtó alá rendezte Gazda István. Budapest, Magyar Tudománytörténeti Intézet (*Magyar Tudománytörténeti Szemle Könyvtára*; 8).
- Palló, Gábor 2006. Encyclopaedia as Textbook. *Science & Education*, 15/7–8. 779–799.
- Tordai, Zádor 1962. A magyar karteziánizmus történeti vázlata. *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle*, 6/1. 54–79.
- Tordai, Zádor 1964. Esquisse de l'histoire du cartésianisme en Hongrie. In: *Études sur Descartes*. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 135–168. (*Studia Philosophica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 6).
- Turóczi-Trostler, József 1933. *Magyar cartesziánusok*. Budapest, (*Minerva-könyvtár*).
- Weszprémi, István 1774–1787. *Succinta medicorum Hungariae et Transylvaniae biographia*. I–IV. Lipsiae–Viennae, ex Officina Sommeria–Trattner.
- Zoványi, Jenő 2004. *A magyarországi protestantizmus története 1895-ig*. I–II. Máriabesnyő–Gödöllő, Attraktor.